

Gibril Fouad Haddad
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Adapted from ‘Abd al-Ghanī ‘Abd al-Khāliq’s
Hujjiyyat al-Sunna
Foreword by Dr Muḥammad Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī

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Ibn Ḥajar’s Commentary
on the
Hadīth of *Islām, Īmān, Iḥsān*

The following chapter is a complete translation of Ibn Ḥajar’s commentary on the ḥadīth of *Islām*, *Imān*, *Ihsān* from *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (1959 ed.), Book of *Imān*, ḥadīth §50. I was privileged with access to my Teacher – may Allāh bless and keep him – Mawlana al-Shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣim’s original volumes of Muḥammad al-Zuhri al-Ghamrāwī’s 1896 and 1905 “Yunīniyya” editions and Aḥmad ‘Alī al-Sihārfūrī al-Ishāqī al-Ḥanafī’s 1856 edition. The latter contains the exact same narration that Ibn Ḥajar refers to – as ascertained externally by their respective *isnāds* and, internally, by his commentary. Its *isnād* is al-Firabri’s narration through the ḥadīth Master Shaykh al-Islām ‘Abd al-Awwal ibn ‘Isā, Abū al-Waqt al-Ṣūfī al-Sijzi al-Harawī (d. 553), taken from Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad al-Tanūkhī by Ibn Ḥajar who passed it on to Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī until it reached al-Sihārfūrī through Shāh Wali Allāh al-Dīhlawī and Imām ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Lacknawī (d. 1202). Abū al-Waqt’s narration is referred to with the siglum ↗ in the Yunīniyya edition. Present-day editions of *Fatḥ al-Bārī* – including that used here – comprise a text of al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ* different from that which Ibn Ḥajar actually refers to in this ḥadīth, as shown by our remarks below (notes a-b and Section 6, par. **when a man came to him** p. 170). The Imām and ḥadīth Master Sharaf al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī ibn Shaykh al-Islām Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥāshimī al-Yunīnī al-Ba’labakkī al-Ḥanbalī (621-701) is famed for his meticulous transmission of al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Al-Dhahabī accompanied him and narrated from him in Ba’labakk and Damascus, as he related in the *Siyar* (Fikr ed. 17:120 §6086).

The Ḥadīth of *Islām*, *Īmān*, *Iḥsān* from Bukhārī’s and Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥs* with Ibn Hajar’s Commentary from *Fatḥ al-Bārī*

The Prophet ﷺ said: “*Islām* is an outward proclamation while *Īmān* is in the heart.”²⁷⁰

“*Īmān* is one of the characteristics of *islām*. Every *īmān* is *islām* but not vice-versa.”

– Ibn al-Baqillānī²⁷¹

“Belief weakens in two ways, one bad, one good. The bad way is the weakening of certitude and the increase of doubt; the good way is the thinning of the veil, as belief can only be from behind a veil. So, the more one rises toward the station of excellence (*al-ihsān*), which is the station of “being present and beholding” (*maqām hadrat al-shuhūd*), the more the veil of belief weakens and thins, and one’s vision grows stronger.”

– Al-Sha‘rānī²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Narrated from Anas by Aḥmad, al-Bazzār, Abū Ya‘lā, and Ibn Abī Shayba with a chain of trustworthy narrators per al-Haythamī.

²⁷¹ In his *Tamhīd al-Awā'il* (p. 390).

²⁷² In *al-‘Uhūd al-Muhammadiyya*, commentary on the ḥadīth: “Change the wrong with your heart, and that is the weakest belief.” The Prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever of you sees wrongdoing, let him change it with his hand; if he cannot, then with his tongue; if he cannot, then with his heart, and that is the weakest belief.” Narrated from Abū Sa‘id al-Khudrī by Muslim. Al-Sha‘rānī related from Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Matbūlī: “The changing of wrongs with the tongue is specific to the Ulema, that with the hand is specific to the governors, and that with the heart is specific to the Friends of Allāh.”

1. Al-Bukhārī's Chapter-Title and First Narration: Book of *Īmān*²⁷³

CHAPTER OF GIBRĪL'S QUESTION TO THE PROPHET ﷺ ON *ĪMĀN*,
ISLĀM, *IHSĀN*, AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE FINAL HOUR, AND THE
PROPHET'S ﷺ EXPOSITION TO HIM. THEN HE SAID: "GIBRĪL ﷺ
CAME TO TEACH YOU YOUR RELIGION," THEREBY MAKING THIS –
ALL OF IT – THE RELIGION. HOW THE PROPHET ﷺ EXPOUNDED
(BAYYANA) *ĪMĀN* TO 'ABD AL-QAYS'S DELEGATION, AND ALLĀH
ALMIGHTY'S SAYING: {AND WHOSE SEEKS AS RELIGION OTHER
THAN THE SURRENDER (TO ALLĀH) IT WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED
FROM HIM, [AND HE WILL BE A LOSER IN THE HEREAFTER]} (3:85).

Musaddad narrated to us: Ismā'īl ibn Ibrāhīm narrated to us: Abū Ḥayyān al-Taymī told us: From Abū Zur'a: From Abū Hurayra who said:

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was in full sight of the people one day when Gibrīl²⁷⁴ came to him and said: "What is belief (*mā al-īmān*)?" The Prophet ﷺ replied: "Belief is that you believe in Allāh, His angels, His Books,²⁷⁵ His encounter, His Messengers, and that you believe in the resurrection." He said: "What is submission (*mā al-islām*)?" The Prophet ﷺ replied: "Submission is that you worship Allāh without associating anything with Him, accomplish the prayer, remit the obligatory purification-tax, and fast Ramaḍān." He said: "What is excellence (*mā al-ihsān*)?" The Prophet ﷺ replied: "That you worship Allāh as if you were seeing Him; for if you do not see Him, He certainly sees you."

²⁷³ Book of *Īmān*, *Bāb* 37 (*Fatḥ al-Bārī* 1959 ed. 1:114).

²⁷⁴ Sahāranfūrī has: "when a man came to him." The Yunīniyya has "Gibrīl," but indicates in the margins that "a man" is found in most narrations including Abū al-Waqt's. Both are sound transmissions as indicated by al-Yunīnī in his own marginalia. Ibn Hajar's commentary has: "and a man came to him" meaning an angel."

²⁷⁵ "His Books" is missing from Sahāranfūrī and the Yunīniyya. Only one narration mentions it according to the latter.

He said: “When is the Final Hour?” The Prophet replied ﷺ: “The one who is questioned about is no more informed at all than the questioner, but I shall tell you of its preconditions (*ashrātiḥā*): when the slave girl gives birth to her master and when the destitute camelherds (*ru‘ātu al-ibili al-buhmu*)/the herdsmen of jet-black camels (*ru‘ātu al-ibili al-buhami*) compete in building tall structures. [It is] among five things none knows but Allāh.”²⁷⁶ Then the Prophet ﷺ recited: {*Lo! Allāh! With Him is knowledge of the Hour*} (31:34), [to the end of] the verse. Then he [Gibril] turned around and left. Then the Prophet ﷺ said: “Bring him back!” But they could not see anything. He said: “This was Gibril. He came teaching the people their Religion.”

Abū ‘Abd Allāh [al-Bukhārī] said: “He made this – all of it – part of belief (*ja‘alā dhāliku kullahu min al-īmān*).”

2. Al-Bukhārī’s Second Narration: Book of *Tafsīr*²⁷⁷

Ishāq narrated to me: From Jarīr: From Abū Ḥayyān: From Abū Zur‘ā: From Abū Hurayra ﷺ:

That the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was in full sight of the people one day when suddenly a man came to him on foot and said: “Messenger of Allāh! What is belief?” The Prophet ﷺ replied: “Belief is that you believe in Allāh, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, His encounter, and that you believe in the next resurrection.” He said: “Messenger of Allāh! What is submission?” The Prophet ﷺ replied: “Submission is that you worship Allāh without associating anything with Him, accomplish the prescribed prayer, remit the obligatory purification-tax, and fast Ramaḍān.” The man said: “Messenger of Allāh!

²⁷⁶ This phrase forms an independent ḥadīth which al-‘Irāqī discussed in *Tarḥ al-Tathrīb* (8:253-255).

²⁷⁷ Book of *Tafsīr*, ḥadīth §4777 (*Fatḥ al-Bārī* 1959 ed. 8:514).

What is excellence?" The Prophet ﷺ replied: "Excellence is that you worship Allāh as if you were seeing Him; for if you do not see Him, He certainly sees you." The man said: "Messenger of Allāh! When is the Final Hour?" The Prophet ﷺ replied: "The one who is questioned about it is no more informed at all than the questioner. I shall tell you about its preconditions (*ashrātihā*): when a woman gives birth to her mistress – that is one of its preconditions. And when the barefoot and naked are the top leaders of the people – that is one of its preconditions. [It is] among five things none knows but Allāh." Then the Prophet ﷺ recited: *{Lo! Allāh! With Him is knowledge of the Hour. He sends down the rain and knows that which is in the wombs}* (31:34), [to the end of] the verse. The man went away. Then the Prophet ﷺ said: "Bring [him] back to me!" But they could not see anything. He said: "This was Gibrīl. He came to teach the people their Religion."

3. Muslim's First Set of Narrations²⁷⁸

- a. Abū Khaythama Zuhayr ibn Ḥarb narrated to me: Waki‘ narrated to us: From Kahmas: From ‘Abd Allāh ibn Burayda: From Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar;
- b. Also, ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Mu‘ādh al-‘Anbārī narrated to us – and this is his version: My father narrated to us: Kahmas narrated to us: From Abū Burayda: From Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar who said:

The first one to speak about *al-qadar* [in heresy] in al-Baṣra was Ma‘bad al-Juhanī.²⁷⁹ I went on the major or minor pilgrimage together with Ḥumayd ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Ḥimyārī. We said: Would that we met one of the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, so that we could ask him about what those

²⁷⁸ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Book of *Īmān*, ḥadīth §8 [‘Abd al-Bāqī ed. 1:36-38].

²⁷⁹ Ma‘bad al-Juhanī (d. 80) was “the first who spoke about *qadar* in al-Baṣra.” Narrated from Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar by Muslim, al-Tirmidhi, and Abū Dāwūd.

people say concerning foreordained destiny (*al-qadar*). We were happy to meet ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ as he was entering the mosque. We went by his side, I and my friend, one on his right, one on his left. I assumed that my friend would entrust me to speak, so I said: “Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān! Some people have appeared before us who recite the Qur’ān and pursue obscure and difficult questions.” He [Yahyā ibn Ya‘mar] then spoke about them and said that they claimed there was no such thing as foreordained destiny, and that everything was spontaneous and unplanned.

Ibn ‘Umar said: “If you meet those people, tell them that I am clear of them and they are clear of me. By the One by Whom ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar now swears! If anyone of them had the weight of Mount Uhud in gold and spent it [for the sake of Allāh], Allāh would not accept it until he believes in foreordained destiny.” Then he said:

My father ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb narrated to me: “As we sat with the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ one day, all of a sudden a man came up to us. He wore exceedingly white clothes. His hair was jet-black. There was no sign of travel on his person. None of us knew him. He went to sit near the Prophet ﷺ, leaning his knees against his and placing his hands on his thighs. He said: ‘O Muḥammad! tell me about submission (*islām*)’. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: ‘Submission is that you bear witness that there is no God but Allāh and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh; accomplish the prayer; remit the purification-tax; fast during Ramadan; and make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to go there.’ The man said: ‘You have spoken the truth! We wondered at him: how could he be asking the Prophet ﷺ and confirming him at the same time? Then he said: ‘Tell me about belief (*īmān*)’. The Prophet said ﷺ: ‘Belief is that you

believe in Allāh, His angels, His books, His Messengers, and the Last Day; and to believe in foreordained destiny, for better or worse.' The man said: 'You have spoken the truth! Now tell me about excellence (*iḥsān*).' The Prophet replied ﷺ: 'Excellence is that you worship Allāh as if you were seeing Him; for if you do not see Him, He certainly sees you.' The man said: 'Now tell me about the Final Hour.' The Prophet replied ﷺ: 'The one who is questioned about it is no more informed at all than the questioner.' He said: 'Then tell me about its portent (*amāratihā*).' He replied: 'The slave girl shall give birth to her mistress and you shall see the barefoot, naked, indigent (*al-‘āla*) shepherds compete in building tall structures.' Then he left and a long time passed. Later the Prophet ﷺ said to me: 'O ‘Umar, do you know who the questioner was?' I said: 'Allāh and His Messenger know best.' He said: 'That questioner was none other than Gibril. He came to you to teach you your Religion.'

c. Muḥammad ibn ‘Ubayd al-Ghubarī, Abū Kāmil al-Jahdarī, and Aḥmad ibn ‘Abda narrated to me and said: Ḥammād ibn Zayd narrated to us: From Maṭar al-Warrāq: From ‘Abd Allāh ibn Burayda: From Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar who said: "When Ma‘bad began saying what he said in the matter of foreordained destiny we condemned it, so I went on pilgrimage with Ḥumayd ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Ḥimyārī." Then they related the rest of the narration in the same sense as that of Kahmas and the same chain of transmission, with some words added and some subtracted here and there.

d. Muḥammad ibn Ḥātim narrated to me: Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd al-Qaṭān narrated to us: 'Uthmān ibn Ghiyāth narrated to us: ‘Abd Allāh ibn Burayda narrated to us: From Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar and Ḥumayd ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān who both said: "We met ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar and mentioned foreordained destiny and

what they were saying about it.” The rest of the ḥadīth was recounted in similar fashion to their narration from ‘Umar ﷺ from the Prophet ﷺ, with something added and something missing.

e. Ḥajjāj ibn al-Shā‘ir narrated to me: Yūnus ibn Muḥammad narrated to us: al-Mu‘tamir [ibn Sulaymān ibn Ṭarkhān] narrated to us: From his father: From Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar: From Ibn ‘Umar: From ‘Umar: From the Prophet ﷺ, a similar version.

4. Muslim’s Second Set of Narrations²⁸⁰

a. Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shayba and Zuhayr ibn Ḥarb narrated to us: Both from [Ismā‘il ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Miqsam al-Asadī al-Baṣrī] Ibn ‘Ulayya: Zuhayr [ibn Ḥarb, Abū Khaythama] said: Ismā‘il ibn Ibrāhīm narrated to us: From Abū Ḥayyān: From Abū Zur‘a ibn ‘Amr ibn Jarīr: From Abū Hurayra who said:

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was in full sight of the people one day when a man came to him and said: “Messenger of Allāh! What is belief?” The Prophet ﷺ replied: “That you believe in Allāh, His angels, His Books, His encounter, His Messengers, and that you believe in the next resurrection.” He said: “Messenger of Allāh! What is submission?” The Prophet ﷺ replied: “Submission is that you worship Allāh without associating anything with Him, accomplish the prescribed prayer, remit the obligatory purification-tax, and fast Ramadān.” The man said: “Messenger of Allāh! What is excellence?” The Prophet ﷺ replied: “That you worship Allāh as if you were seeing Him; for even if you do not see Him, He certainly sees you.” The man said: “Messenger of Allāh! When is the Final Hour?” The Prophet replied ﷺ: “The one who is questioned about it is no more informed at all than the questioner. However, I shall tell you about its preconditions (*ashrāṭihā*). When the slave girl

²⁸⁰ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Book of Īmān, ḥadīth §9 [‘Abd al-Bāqī ed. 1:39].

gives birth to her master – that is one of its preconditions. And when the naked and barefoot are the top leaders of the people – that is one of its preconditions. And when the shepherds compete in building tall structures – that is one of its preconditions. [It is] among five things none knows but Allāh.” Then he recited: *{Lo! Allāh! With Him is knowledge of the Hour. He sends down the rain and knows that which is in the wombs. No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die. Lo! Allāh is Knower, Aware}* {31:34}. Then the man turned around and left. Then the Prophet ﷺ said: “Bring that man back to me!” They went to bring him back but saw nothing. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “This was Gibril. He came to teach the people their Religion.”

b. Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Numayr narrated to us: Muḥammad ibn Bishr narrated to us: Abū Ḥayyān al-Taymī narrated to us the same ḥadīth with this chain, except that his version has: “If the slave girl gives birth to her husband, meaning the concubines.”²⁸¹

5. Muslim’s Third Narration²⁸²

Zuhayr ibn Ḥarb narrated to me: Jarīr narrated to us: From ‘Umāra – this is Ibn al-Qa‘qā’ – from Abū Zur‘a: From Abū Hurayra who said:

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Ask me questions!” (*salūni*) but the people were too intimidated to ask. Then a man came and sat by his knees and said: “Messenger of Allāh! What is submission?” The Prophet ﷺ replied: “When you associate nothing

²⁸¹ Due to the accession of the sons of slave-girls to the throne and their subsequent purchase of concubines among whom, unbeknown to them, are their own mothers.

²⁸² Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Book of *Īmān*, ḥadīth §10 [‘Abd al-Bāqī ed. 1:40].

with Allāh, accomplish the prayer, remit the obligatory purification-tax, and fast Ramadān.” The man said: “You have spoken the truth! Messenger of Allāh! What is belief?” The Prophet ﷺ replied: “That you believe in Allāh, His angels, His Books, His encounter, His Messengers, and that you believe in the resurrection, and that you believe in foreordained destiny completely.” He said: “You have spoken the truth! Messenger of Allāh! What is excellence?” The Prophet ﷺ replied: “That you fear Allāh as if you were seeing Him; for if you see Him not, He certainly sees you.” The man said: “You have spoken the truth! Messenger of Allāh! When shall the Final Hour rise?” The Prophet replied ﷺ: “The one who is questioned about it is no more informed at all than the questioner. However, I shall tell you about its preconditions (*ashrātihā*). When a woman gives birth to her master – that is one of its preconditions. And when you see that the barefoot and naked, the deaf and dumb are the kings of the earth – that is one of its preconditions. And when you see the cattleherds compete in building tall structures – that is one of its preconditions. [It is] among five things of the Unseen that none knows but Allāh.” Then he recited: {*Lo! Allāh! With Him is knowledge of the Hour. He sends down the rain and knows that which is in the wombs. No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die. Lo! Allāh is Knower, Aware*} (31:34). The man rose and left. Then the Prophet ﷺ said: “Bring that man back!” They looked for him but did not find him. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “This was Gibrīl. He wanted you to learn despite your not asking.”

6. Ibn Hajar's Commentary on al-Bukhārī's Chapter-Title and First Narration as well as the Variants²⁸³

Chapter of Gibril's question on *īmān*, *islām*, etc. We have seen that al-Bukhārī considers *īmān* and *islām* expressions of a single meaning.²⁸⁴ Since Gibril's question about *īmān* and *islām* and the answer he received appeared, of necessity, to differentiate between them – the former signifying truthfulness in specific matters, the latter, the display of specific matters – he [al-Bukhārī] attempted to cancel out the distinction by interpreting it figuratively (*bil-ta'wīl*), according to his preconception.

and the [Prophet's ﷺ] declaration [to Gibril] That is: “together with the declaration that conviction (*al-i‘tiqād*), together with deeds, makes up Religion.”

and how he expounded [*īmān* to ‘Abd al-Qays's delegation] That is: “together with what he expounded to the delegation to the effect that *īmān* is *islām* itself” since he explained *īmān* in the narration to the delegation in the same terms in which he explained *islām* here.²⁸⁵

²⁸³ *Fath al-Bārī* (1959 ed. 1:115-125 §50).

²⁸⁴ Cf. *Fath al-Bārī*, beginning of the book of *Īmān* (1959 ed. 1:45-55) and chapter previous to this (1:111). Al-Za‘farānī reported that al-Shāfi‘ī in his commentary on the hadith “Free her, for she is a believer,” said: “*Islām* is *īmān*.” In al-Bayhaqī, *Manāqib al-Shāfi‘ī* (1:395). On the contextual difference of the two terms, Ibn Khafif said in his *Aqīda* (§70 and §77): “Belief (*al-īmān*) is different from submission (*al-islām*).... Every believer (*mu‘min*) is a Muslim, but not every Muslim is a believer.” Ibn al-Bāqillānī said in *Tamhīd al-Awā'il* (p. 390): “*Īmān* is one of the characteristics (*khiṣāl*) of *islām*. Every *īmān* is *islām* but not vice-versa.” See also Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām’s short treatise, *Ma‘nā al-Īmān wal-Islām*, *Tabaqāt al-Hanābilā* (1:25, 2:14, 2:302) and Shaykh Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī’s epistle *al-Mu‘min wal-Muslim wal-Muhsin*.

²⁸⁵ The Prophet ﷺ imposed upon the delegation of the tribe of ‘Abd al-Qays belief in Allāh alone and said: “Do you know what belief in Allāh Alone is?” They replied: “Allāh and His Messenger know best.” He said: “The testimony that there is no god but Allāh, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh; the accomplish-

and the Saying of Allāh That is: “together with the verse’s indication that *islām* itself is the Religion, and the indication of Abū Sufyān’s relation that *īmān* is the Religion.²⁸⁶ All this requires that *islām* and *īmān* be one and the same.” This is the gist of al-Bukhārī’s words.

[The Difference Between *Islām* and *Īmān*]

Abū ‘Awāna al-Isfarāyīnī reports in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from al-Shāfi‘ī’s companion, al-Muzanī, the categorical opinion that they are the expressions of a single meaning, and that he heard it from al-Shāfi‘ī; Abū ‘Awāna also reports from Imām Ahmad the catego-

ment of prayer; the remittance of the purification-tax; the fasting of Ramaḍan; and that you give one fifth of the spoils.” Narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās as part of a longer hadīth by al-Bukhārī in the book of *Īmān* (§53, *Fath al-Bārī* 1959 ed.) and Muslim.

²⁸⁶ There are two relations of Abū Sufyān to that effect, both narrated by al-Bukhārī at the end of the first book of his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Book of the Beginning of Revelation):

(1) “Heraclius summoned the Roman authorities to his villa (*daskara*) in Ḥims, ordered the gates locked, then looked at them and said: ‘O Romans! Do you want to reap success, do what is right, and ensure that your empire will endure? Follow this Prophet.’ At this, they fled like wild asses and made for the gates, but found them locked. When Heraclius saw their loathing of what he had proposed to them he despaired of their belief (*īmān*). ‘Bring them back to me,’ he ordered; then he addressed them again: ‘I said this just now only in order to test the strength of your attachment to your religion (*dīn*), of which I am satisfied.’ At this they prostrated to him and they were happy again. That was the last we heard of Heraclius.” Narrated as part of a longer hadīth by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

(2) Heraclius asked me [Abū Sufyān] about the Prophet’s ﷺ followers: “Are their numbers increasing or decreasing?” I said they are increasing. He said: “Does any of them recant out of discontent with his religion after entering it?” I said no [...] Then Heraclius said to the translator: “Say to him [Abū Sufyān]: “I asked you whether their numbers were increasing or decreasing and you said the former; and indeed such is the case with belief (*īmān*) until it is complete. I asked you if any of them reneged out of discontent with their religion (*dīn*) after entering it and you said no; and indeed such is belief (*īmān*) when its elation (*bashāsha*) pervades the heart.” Narrated both as part of a longer hadīth by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and as an independent hadīth by al-Bukhārī.

rical opinion that they are two different meanings.²⁸⁷ Each position has mutually contradictory proofs. Al-Khaṭṭābī said: “Two great Imāms have compiled texts on this question with much evidence supporting each position, and they hold opposite opinions.”²⁸⁸ The truth is that there is a general understanding and a

²⁸⁷ Al-Shāfi‘ī, Aḥmad, and the Ash‘arī School – contrary to Abū Ḥanifa and Mālik – prefer that one add *inshā’ Allāh* to the affirmation “I am a believer.” “If a man is asked: ‘Are you a *mu’min*? Let him say: ‘I am a *mu’min*, if Allāh wills.’ Or let him say: ‘I hope that I am a *mu’min*.’ Or: ‘I believe in Allāh, His angels, His Books, and His Messengers.’” Narrated as a saying of Imām Aḥmad from al-Īṣākhṛī by Ibn Abī Ya‘lā in *Tabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (1:25). Abū Bakr al-Marwāzī said: “Abū ‘Abd Allāh [Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal] was asked: ‘Should we say that we are *mu’minūn*? He replied: ‘No, but we should say that we are *muslimūn*.’” Ibid. (2:14). Abū Muhammād Rizq Allāh al-Tamīmī: “He [Aḥmad] used to say: ‘*Īmān* is definitely other than *islām*.’” Ibid. (2:302). Al-Qushayrī in *al-Risāla* (p. 35) narrates that Abū al-‘Abbās al-Sayyārī said: “His bestowal is of two kinds: Generosity (*karāma*) and entrapment (*istidrāj*). Whatever He causes to abide in you is Generosity. Whatever He removes from you is entrapment. Therefore say: ‘I am a Believer if Allāh wills’ (*anā mu’minun in shā’ Allāh*).” This is the Shāfi‘ī, Ash‘arī, and Hanbali position. As for Ḥanafis and Mālikis they allow it. Sidi Muṣṭafa Baṣīr said to this author: “One may say he is a real believer on the evidence of the verse {*Those are they who are in truth believers*} (8:4) for possessing five traits: their hearts tremble at the mention of Allāh; His signs increase them in faith; they rely on Him; they pray; and they spend of what Allāh has granted them. And Mālik used to say – Allāh have mercy on him: ‘I am a believer, and praise belongs to Allāh.’” Cf. al-Qādī ‘Iyād, *Tartib al-Madārik* (2:42). See also al-Haytamī’s commentary on the ḥadīth of Islām and *Īmān* in his *Al-Tabyīn fī Sharḥ al-Arba‘īn* (Cairo: ‘Isā al-Ḥalabī, n.d.). Ibn al-Subkī mentioned as one of the proofs of the Ash‘arī position the ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ that “A man assuredly does the deeds of the people of Paradise as far as the people can see but he is in fact one of the people of Hellfire; and another man assuredly does the deeds of the people of Hellfire as far as the people can see but he is in fact one of the people of Paradise.” Narrated from Sahl ibn Sa‘d al-Sā‘idi by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Ibn al-Subkī said in *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi‘īyya al-Kubrā* (4:39): “The addition *as far as the people can see* there is of huge import, immense benefit [as a proof] for Ash‘arīs, and greatly useful for *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘a* in relation to the question of ‘I am a *mu’min* if Allāh wills.’ Let whoever can understand what its signals, understand.” See, on the other hand, the ḥadīth of Ḥāritha cf. our *Sunnah Notes I* (p. 150), “This morning I am a real believer.”

²⁸⁸ See also Ibn Rajab’s discussion in the beginning of his *Jāmi‘ al-‘Ulūm wal-*

particular understanding for each of the two. Every *mu'min* is a Muslim, but not every Muslim is a *mu'min*.” This is the gist of what he said. It presupposes that *islām* is not applied, as a word, to belief and performance together, as opposed to *īmān*, which supposedly applies to both of them. This is refuted by the saying of Allāh: {And I have chosen for you as religion Islām} (5:3) for *Islām* entails both performance and belief, since an unbelieving performer does not have an acceptable religion.²⁸⁹ This is the argument used by al-Muzanī and Abū Muḥammad al-Baghawī.

Al-Baghawī said concerning the ḥadīth of Gibril: “The Prophet ﷺ used *islām* here as a word for visible performance of deeds, and *īmān* as a word for the hidden aspect of belief. This is not because performance is not part of *īmān*, nor because confirmation (*al-taṣdīq*) is not part of *islām*, but only as the itemization of a unified whole whose heading is the Religion (*al-dīn*). This is why the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘He came to teach you your religion,’ and Allāh ﷺ said: {And I have chosen for you as religion Islām}, {And whoso seeks as religion other than the Surrender (to Allāh) it will not be accepted from him} (3:85). For religion does not deserve Divine pleasure and acceptance except if confirmation is part of it.” This is the end of al-Baghawī’s words.

[The Complementariness of *Islām* and *īmān*]

What emerges from the sum of the proof-texts is that *islām* and *īmān* each have a proper legal sense (*haqīqa shar'iyya*) as well as

Hikam; al-Ṭabbā’ī’s edition of Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām’s *Ma’nā al-Īmān wal-Islām*; and Shaykh Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī’s epistle *al-Mu'min wal-Muslim wal-Muhsin*.

²⁸⁹ Al-Khaṭṭābī is correct in that he is paraphrasing the Qur’ān, {Say: You believe not, but rather say ‘We submit’ for *īmān* has not yet penetrated your hearts} (49:14) and is confirmed by the ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ from Anas in Ahmād, “*Islām* is proclaimed while *īmān* is in the heart” cited by Ibn Kathīr in his *Tafsīr* in explanation of the verse {but Allāh has endeared the faith (*al-īmān*) to you and has beautified it in your heart} (49:7) nor is it necessarily true that al-Khaṭṭābī’s statement presupposes what Ibn Hajar said.

a proper lexical sense (*haqīqa lughawiyya*). However, each term presupposes the other to complete its own meaning (*kullun min-humā mustalzimun lil-ākhar bi-ma‘nā al-takmīl*). For just as the performer of an action is not a perfect *muslim* unless he believes, so is the believer not a perfect *mu’mīn* unless he performs. Whenever the word *īmān* is used in the place of *islām* or vice-versa, and whenever one is used in the sense of both, it is a metaphorical usage (*‘alā sabīl al-majāz*). The actual sense becomes clear through the context. If they occur together in the course of a question, they are construed in the literal sense; if they do not occur together or if it is not in the course of a question, then they may be construed either literally or metaphorically depending on whatever is mentioned along with them.

Al-Ismā‘ilī said that the above explanation was that of *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā‘a*: “They said that the meaning of *īmān* and *islām* differs only when they are mentioned together. If one is mentioned alone, the other enters into its definition.” Likewise, what Muḥammad ibn Naṣr related – and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr followed him – saying that the majority equated between the two regardless of what is mentioned in the ḥadīth of ‘Abd al-Qays, and what al-Lālikā‘ī and Ibn al-Sim‘ānī said to the effect that *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā‘a* differentiated between the two on the basis of the content of the ḥadīth of Gibrīl. Allāh is the Grantor of all success.

and knowledge of the Hour This [specifying of the word “knowledge”] is al-Bukhārī’s explanation of the meaning of Gibrīl’s words in the question: “When is the Hour?” That is: “When is the Final Hour going to be known?” and, of course, what is implicit is: “When is the timing of the Final Hour going to be known?”

and the announcement of the Prophet ﷺ. The words are in the genitive form [in Arabic] because they are in conjunction with

“knowledge” which is itself in the genitive as it is in construct [with “Chapter”]. If it is asked that since the Prophet ﷺ did not announce the timing of the Final Hour, how could al-Bukhārī speak of the Prophet’s ﷺ announcement to that effect? The answer is that the meaning of “declaration” here is “what addresses most of what the question is raising.” Al-Bukhārī therefore used the word in an absolute sense, as the status that applies to most of a thing is the same as that which applies to all of it. Or else al-Bukhārī represented the status of the Final Hour as being exclusively in Allāh’s knowledge, a declaration of the Prophet ﷺ in itself.

Ismā‘il ibn Ibrāhīm narrated to us: This is al-Baṣrī, known as Ibn ‘Ulayya, who said:

Abū Ḥayyān al-Tamīmī told us: Al-Bukhārī also cites him in the commentary of Sūrat Luqmān, as per the ḥadīth of Jarīr ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd from the same Abū Ḥayyān. Muslim related the ḥadīth through another chain, also from Jarīr but through ‘Umāra ibn al-Qa‘qā’, while Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā’ī also narrated it as per Jarīr’s ḥadīth from Abū Farwa [‘Urwa ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ḥamdānī], all three groups (al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā’ī):

from Abū Zur‘a [ibn ‘Amr ibn Jarīr al-Bajalī], from Abū Hurayra ﷺ: Abū Farwa adds “and from Abū Dharr also,” and conveys all of his narration from both of them [Abū Hurayra and Abū Dharr]. The latter version contains additional benefits to which we shall refer later, *in shā’ Allāh*. I did not see this ḥadīth narrated from Abū Hurayra except through this same Abū Zur‘a ibn ‘Amr ibn Jarīr, and al-Bukhārī did not document it except through Abū Ḥayyān from Abū Zur‘a.

[Muslim's Chains and the Variance of Their Texts]

Muslim outset (*akhraja*)²⁹⁰ the ḥadīth from the account of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. That transmission also contains additional benefits. Al-Bukhārī did not cite it because there are some discrepancies in it according to some of its narrators. Its best known chain is the narration of Kahmas ibn al-Ḥasan: From ‘Abd Allāh ibn Burayda; From Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar; From ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar; From his father ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, which a large group of ḥadīth Masters have related. Following it up²⁹¹ is Maṭar al-Warrāq’s narration from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Burayda; then Sulaymān [ibn Ṭarkhān] al-Taymī’s from Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar. Likewise, ‘Uthmān ibn Ghīyāth related it from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Burayda but said: From Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar and Ḥumayd ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān together; From ibn ‘Umar; From ‘Umar. Now Ḥumayd is mentioned in the best-known chain, but not as a narrator.²⁹²

Muslim forwarded these chains but did not convey from them other than the content (*matn*) of the first chain, assigning the remaining chains to that text. There is, however, much variance among them, and we shall point out some of it.

Maṭar’s narration: Abū ‘Awāna in his *Sahīh* and others.

Sulaymān al-Taymī’s narration: Ibn Khuzayma in his *Sahīh* and others.

‘Uthmān ibn Ghīyāth’s narration: Aḥmad in his *Musnad*.

²⁹⁰The *makhraj* or outset of a chain or ḥadīth consists in its top two to five or more links from the Prophet ﷺ to one of the early (pre-fifth century) compilers.

²⁹¹I.e. in descending order of strength in sister-chains.

²⁹²See above, §3. a-d (“I [Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar] went on pilgrimage with Ḥumayd ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Ḥimyarī...”).

At variance with the above three transmissions is that of Sulaymān ibn Burayda – ‘Abd Allāh’s brother – who narrated it from Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar who said: “While we were with the Prophet ﷺ,” thus classing it among Ibn ‘Umar’s own narrations, not as his relation from his father. This chain is cited by Ahmād also.

Also Abū Nu‘aym in the *Hilya* through ‘Atā’ al-Khurāsānī from Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar.

Also al-Ṭabarānī through ‘Atā’ ibn Abī Rabāḥ from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar.

It is also narrated from Anas by al-Bazzār and al-Bukhārī in *Khalq Af’āl al-‘Ibād* with a fair chain.

Also Abū ‘Awāna in his *Sahīḥ* from Jarīr [ibn ‘Abd Allāh] al-Bajalī, but his chain contains Khālid ibn Yazid – this is al-‘Umarī – who is unfit for the level of *sahīḥ*.

It is also narrated from Ibnu ‘Abbās and Abū ‘Āmir al-Ash‘arī by Ahmād with fair chains.

We shall mention the benefits of all these chains, *in shā’ Allāh*, in the course of discussing the ḥadīth of this chapter. I only gathered the chains of this ḥadīth here and traced them to their compilers in order to facilitate future reference to them and avoid extended repetitions. Allāh grants all success.

The Prophet ﷺ was in full sight (*bārīzan*) of the people one day It means that he was making himself seen to them, neither keeping himself away from them nor occupied with anyone in particular. “Exposure” (*burūz*) is visibility. The narration of Abū Farwā which we mentioned begins thus: “The Prophet ﷺ used to sit among his companions and if a stranger came he would not

know who, among the people, was the Prophet ﷺ. So, we asked him if we could provide him a seat that would make him recognizable by visiting strangers, and we made him a clay seat on which he would sit.”

Al-Qurṭubī²⁹³ inferred from the above the ruling that it is desirable (*mustaḥabb*) for the person of knowledge to sit in a place special to him, and that it be raised if need be, for the necessity of teaching and the like.

when a man came to him²⁹⁴ That is, an angel in the form of a man. Al-Bukhārī has in the Book of *Tafsīr*: “suddenly a man came to him on foot.”²⁹⁵ Abū Farwa has: “We were all sitting with him when suddenly a man came, the most handsome, most fragrant of people, and his clothes looked immaculate.” Muslim – through Kahmas from ‘Umar’s account – has:

As we sat with the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ one day, lo and behold! a man came up to us. He wore exceedingly white clothes. His hair was jet-black. (Ibn Ḥibbān’s narration here states: “His beard was jet-black.”) There was no sign of travel on his person. Yet none of us knew him. He went to sit near the Prophet ﷺ, leaning his knees against his, and placing his hands on his thighs.

One narration through Sulaymān al-Taymī states: “There was no appearance of travel on him whatsoever, yet he was not from our parts. He stepped forward until he kneeled down in front of the

²⁹³ This Qurṭubī is not the famous Qur’ānic commentator Muḥammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abi Bakr ibn Farḥ, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Khaṣraji al-Andalusī (d. 671) but his teacher the Imām Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar ibn Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī al-Mālikī al-Iskandarī (d. 656) who authored a famed commentary of his own abridgment of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* and whom Abū ‘Abd Allāh quotes most frequently in his *Tafsīr*.

²⁹⁴ See p. 152 and note 274.

²⁹⁵ See above, §2.

Prophet ﷺ as we do in the prayer, and he placed his hand on the Prophet’s ﷺ knees.”

Ibn ‘Abbās’s ḥadīth has the same and so does Abū ‘Āmir al-Ash‘arī, with the wording “and he placed his hand on the Prophet’s ﷺ knees.” This narration tells us that the pronoun “his” in the phrase “on his thighs” refers to the Prophet ﷺ. That is al-Baghawī’s and Ismā‘il al-Taymī’s categorical opinion on this version, while al-Ṭibī²⁹⁶ merely favors it after discussing it, because he considers it the logical thread of the account. Al-Nawawī understands it categorically to the contrary – al-Tūribishtī agrees with him – on the grounds that Gibrīl sat like the student in front of his teacher. Even if this is evident from the context, nevertheless, the placing of his hands on the Prophet’s ﷺ thighs serves to compel [the Prophet ﷺ] to listen to him.

There is in this detail an illustration of the requirements of modesty and tolerance for the one who is questioned by an apparently rude questioner. It appears that Gibril wanted by that to stress the commonality of his character so as to incline people to believe that he came from the coarsest of the Bedouins. Hence, he stepped over the people until he reached the Prophet ﷺ, as was said before. That is the reason the Companions considered his behavior strange,²⁹⁷ and also because he was not from the region and came on foot, yet there was no trace of travel on him.

²⁹⁶ The Ash‘arī Imām Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṭibī (d. 743) studied under Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī and authored *al-Tibyān fil-Ma‘āni wal-Bayān* as well as commentaries on *Maṣābiḥ al-Sunnah*, the *Mishkāt*, and the *Kashshāf*. Ibn Ḥajar writes: “He was modest, excellent in his doctrine and tough in his rebuttal of philosophers and innovators. His love for Allāh and His Prophet ﷺ was very strong. He was a Sign of Allāh in the extraction of particulars from the Qur’ān and the *Sunan*.” He quotes from him in abundance in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* as does al-Suyūṭī in his works.

²⁹⁷ This can be gathered by the use of the expression “suddenly” in the accounts.

How did ‘Umar know that none of them knew him? He could have relied either on his viewpoint or on the explicit statement of those who were present at the time. The latter is more probable since it was mentioned to be the case in ‘Uthmān ibn Ghiyāth’s narration which has: “The folk looked at one another and said: We do not know this man!”

[The Reason This ḥadīth Took Place]

Muslim reports, in ‘Umāra ibn al-Qa‘qā’s narration, the reason this ḥadīth occurred, since he begins it thus: “The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Ask me questions!’ But they were too intimidated to ask him. Then a man came...”²⁹⁸ Ibn Mandah’s narration through Yazīd ibn Zuray‘ from Kahmas has: “As the Prophet ﷺ was giving a sermon (*yakhtub*), a man came to him,” as if his order to interrogate him was part of the *khuṭba*. It would seem that the man’s arrival was during that sermon. Either it coincided with its end, or the Prophet ﷺ had mentioned that part while sitting and the narrator expressed it as a *khuṭba*.

and said: [“What is *īmān*?”] Al-Bukhārī here adds, in the version of the Book of *Tafsīr*: “Messenger of Allāh! What is *īmān*? How could he initiate a question before giving *salām*? Perhaps to stress the commonality of his character, or to show that to give *salām* is not an obligation, unless he actually gave *salām* and the relater did not report it. The third scenario is the most authoritative since it is firmly established by Abū Farwā’s relation which bears, after the words “as if his clothes were immaculate,” the words

and he gave *salām* from the edge of the carpet (*al-bisāt*), saying, “*al-Salāmu ‘alayka yā Muḥammad!*” and the Prophet ﷺ greeted him back. He said: “May I approach (*adnū*), O Muḥammad?” He replied: “Approach (*udnuh!*)” He kept asking again and

²⁹⁸ See above, §5.

again, “May I approach?” and the Prophet ﷺ kept answering him, “Approach!”

There is something similar in ‘Aṭā’s relation from Ibn ‘Umar but ‘Aṭā has “*al-Salāmu ‘alayka yā Rasūl Allāh!*” whereas Maṭar al-Warrāq’s relation has, “He said: *Yā Rasūl Allāh*, may I approach you? He replied: Approach,” without mention of greetings.

So the versions differ as to whether Gibril said to the Prophet ﷺ “*yā Muḥammad*” or “*yā Rasūl Allāh*” in addition to whether he greeted him first.

As for the greeting, those who mention it take precedence over those who omit it. As for Gibril’s omission of the greeting and his uttering “*yā Muḥammad*,” al-Qurṭubī²⁹⁹ said he wanted to show common manners, and so he did what the Bedouins do.

The two versions are reconciled if we consider that Gibril began by calling the Prophet ﷺ by name in the latter sense, then he addressed him with the words “O Messenger of Allāh.” Al-Qurṭubī has: “He said, ‘*al-Salāmu ‘alaykum yā Rasūl Allāh*’ and from this was inferred the desirability, for the newcomer, to give a collective greeting first, then specify whomever he wishes to specify after that.” The versions I myself have seen, however, show that the only greeting given was an individual greeting, namely, “*al-Salāmu ‘alayka yā Rasūl Allāh*.”

“What is *īmān*?” It was said the question about belief (*īmān*) came first because it is the foundation, then submission (*islām*) came second because it shows the veracity of the claim [of *īmān*], and excellence (*iḥsān*) comes third because it hangs upon the first two. In the relation of ‘Umāra ibn al-Qa‘qā’, he begins with *islām* because it relates to outward matters, and puts *īmān* second because it relates to inward matters. Al-Ṭibī preferred the latter because of its progressive development. There is no doubt that

²⁹⁹ See note 293.

the original account is uniform and that those who related it differed in its conveyance by not keeping to a single sequence. This is proven by Maṭar al-Warrāq's relation, which has *islām* first, *ihsān* second, and *īmān* third. So the truth is that the event is a single event and that the interchange in sequence is the doing of the narrators; and Allāh knows best.

He said: “*Īmān* is that you believe in Allāh, etc.” The answer indicates that the Prophet ﷺ understood that he asked him about the correlatives (*muta‘alliqāt*) of belief and not the meaning of the word itself, otherwise the answer would have been that belief is confirmation (*taṣdīq*).

Al-Ṭibī said: “The reply suggests tautology (*takrār*) but this is not the case, for his statement ‘that you believe in Allāh’ implies the meaning ‘that you confess His existence,’ hence the indirect transitive structure (*an tu’mīna billāh*) which means ‘that you confirm together with your acknowledgment of such-and-such.’” However, mere confirmation is also phrased with the indirect transitive, so there is no need to affirm such implication.

Al-Kirmānī (d. 668)³⁰⁰ said: “The reply is not a tautological definition. Rather, what is meant by the thing defined (*al-mahdūd*, i.e. *al-īmān*) is the legal dimension of belief, and what is meant by the definition (*al-hadd*, i.e. *an tu’mīna billāh* etc.) is the lexical dimension.

In my view, he only repeated the word “belief” in order to address its importance and emphasize its matter. Of the same order is the saying of Allāh Most High {Say: He will revive them Who produced them at the first} (36:79) in reply to the question {Who will revive these bones when they have rotted away?} (36:78). In other words, belief is a constituent part of his statement “that you

³⁰⁰ He authored *al-Kawākib al-Darārī fī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in 25 volumes. Ibn Hajar relies on him heavily in the *Fath*.

believe,” as if he had said that belief in the legal sense is a specific form of confirmation.³⁰¹ Otherwise, the answer would have been that belief is confirmation and that belief in Allāh is confirmation of His existence and His being described with the Attributes of perfection, utterly exalted beyond any attribute of defect.

“and His angels” Belief in the angels is the confirmation that they exist and that they are just as Allāh Most High described them, {honored servants} (21:26). The angels come before the Books and the Messengers to reflect to factual sequence of events, since Allāh Most High has sent the angel with the Book to the Messenger. There is no support whatsoever in this sequence for someone who would rank the angel above the Messenger.

“and His Books” This is mentioned here by al-Asīlī³⁰² [alone] in the book of *Tafsīr*, but the narrators mention it one and all in the version of the Book of *Tafsīr*.

Belief in the Books of Allāh is the confirmation that they are indeed the Speech of Allāh and that what they contain is the truth. “and His encounter” Thus in the present version, in between the Books and the Messengers, and so in Muslim through both chains, but not in the remainder of the narrations.

³⁰¹ The specific form of confirmation is to formally declare belief in Allāh, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, etc.

³⁰² The Qayrawāni Andalusian ḥadīth Master, qādī of Saraquṣṭa, and Mālikī jurist Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Asīlī (d. 392) was a student of Abū Bakr al-Shāfi‘ī, Wahb ibn Maysara, Abū Ṭāhir al-Dhuhlī, and Abū Bakr al-Ājurrī. He taught al-Ḍāraqutnī, who said “I never saw his like,” and authored *al-Āthār wal-Dalā'il fil-Khilāf* and *Rubā'iyyat al-Asānid lil-Bukhārī* (“al-Bukhārī’s Four-Link Narrations”) cf. *Tabaqāt al-Fuqahā'*, *Tabaqāt al-Huffāz*, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, *Shadharāt al-Dhabab*, *Kashf al-Zunūn*, etc. Ibn Hajar narrates the *Šāhiḥ* through him, from Abū Zayd Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Marwāzī, from al-Bukhārī cf. his *Mu'jam al-Mufahras* (§1), as well as al-Tirmidhī's *'Ilal* (§584). He quotes him over 350 times in the *Fath* but al-Kattānī overlooks him both in *al-Risāla al-Mustaṭrafa* and *Fahras al-Fahāris!*

It was said to be a repetition since it is inherent in the belief in resurrection, but the truth is that it is not a repetition since it was said that what is meant by resurrection is the rising from the graves, while what is meant by the meeting is what follows it.

It was also said that the meeting occurs with the passing away from the lower world followed by the resurrection. This is indicated by Maṭar al-Warraq's narration which has: "and death and resurrection after death." The ḥadīths of Anas and Ibn 'Abbās have the same.

It was also said that what is meant by the meeting is the vision of Allāh. Al-Khaṭṭābī mentions it but al-Nawawī critiqued this on the grounds that no one may positively assert that he shall see Allāh Most High. For such sight is reserved for those who die believers, whereas one does not know for certain what one's end will be. How then can that [certainty] be one of the conditions of belief? It was replied that what is meant is belief in the reality of such sight in and of itself. This is one of the strong proof-texts for *Ahl al-Sunna* in affirming the vision of Allāh Most High in the hereafter, since it was listed among the foundations of belief.

"and His Messengers" (*wa-rusulih*). Al-Asīlī has "and in His Messengers" (*wa-bi-rusulih*) while the ḥadīths of Anas and Ibn 'Abbās have "and the angels and the Book and the Prophets" (*wal-malā'ikati wal-kitābi wal-nabiyyīn*). Both phrasings are found in the Qur'ān, in Sūrat al-Baqara.³⁰³ However, the expression "Prophets" includes the Messengers but not vice versa.

Belief in the Messengers is the confirmation that they are truthful in all that they related from Allāh Most High. The outlining (*ijmāl*) of the angels, the Books, and the Messengers indicates the sufficiency of that itemization in one's belief in them without

³⁰³ Respectively {Each one believes in Allāh and His angels and His scriptures and His Messengers} (2:285) and {but righteous is he who believes in Allāh and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the Prophets} (2:177).

elaboration, except inasmuch as one of them is named, in which case specific belief in him or it by name becomes obligatory.

This order of sequence conforms with the verse {*the Messenger believes in what has revealed unto him from his Lord*} (2:285). The aptness of such a sequence – although “and” does not determine sequence – or, rather, the meaning of precedence is that goodness and mercy come from Allāh, and of His greatest mercy He has revealed His Books unto His slaves; those who receive it among them are the Prophets, and the intermediary between Allāh and the Prophets are the angels.

“and that you believe in the Resurrection” The *Tafsīr* version has “the final Resurrection” while Muslim in ‘Umar’s narration has “and the Last Day.”

As for “the final Resurrection,” it was said the mention of “last” is for emphasis, as in “yesterday which has passed” (*amsa al-dhāhib*). Another explanation is that the resurrection takes place twice: first, in being brought out into the lower world from non-existence into existence, or from the wombs of mothers, after having been a drop then a clot; second, in being resurrected from the bellies of the graves into the eternal abode.

“The Last Day” was thus named because it is the last of the days of the lower world or the last of the finite periods of time. The meaning of belief in it is the confirmation of what shall befall in it, such as the Reckoning, the Balance, Paradise, and Hellfire. These four are explicitly mentioned after the Resurrection in the narration of Sulaymān al-Taymī and also in the ḥadīth of Ibn ‘Abbās.

A Note of Benefit

Al-Isma‘īlī in his *Mustakhraj* added at this point: “and that you believe in the foreordained Decree (*al-qadar*). This is also in Abū Farwa’s narration and that of Muslim from ‘Umāra ibn al-Qa‘qā’. The later adds the word “entirely” (*kullih*) for emphasis. The narration of Kahmas and Sulaymān al-Taymī has “and that you believe in the foreordained Decree, both its good and its evil” (*khayrihi wa-sharrih*). This is also found in the ḥadīth of Ibn ‘Abbās and the narration of ‘Aṭā’ from Ibn ‘Umar with the addition “and its sweet and its bitter, [all] from Allāh.” It is as if the wisdom of reiterating the words “and that you believe” (*watūmina*) at the mention of the Resurrection is to signal that it is another kind of article of faith, because it is experienced later, whereas whatever came before is already at hand, and also to stress the Resurrection for its own sake in view of its denial by the disbelievers. This is the reason for its frequent mention in the Qur’ān. The same wisdom dictates the repetition of “and that you believe” at the mention of the foreordained Decree, as if to allude to the differences of opinion concerning it. Hence, it is accentuated through the reiteration of “you believe,” then it is resolved with the appositions “its good and its evil, its sweet and its bitter.” Finally, it is emphasized even more by his saying “as coming from Allāh” in the last narration.

The word *qadar* is a verbal noun or substantive (*maṣdar*). You say “I measured or measure the thing” (*qadartu al-shay'*, *uqdiruhu*, *aqdaruhu*) “by its measurement” (*qadr*, *qadar*), when thoroughly assessing its extent. It means that Allāh Most High knows the extent of all things and their timing before they are brought into existence, then He brings into existence whatever He knew would exist in the first place. Thus, every new creation originates (*ṣādir*) in His Knowledge, His Power, and His Will.

This is known in the Religion through categorical and incontrovertible proofs. Such was the belief of the Predecessors among the Companions and the elite of the Successors until the innovation pertaining to *qadar* emerged toward the end of the time of the Companions. Muslim chronicled it through Kahmas, from Ibn Burayda, from Yaḥyā ibn Ya‘mar who said: “The first one to speak about *qadar* in al-Baṣra was Ma‘bad al-Juhanī, so I departed with Ḥumayd al-Himyārī,” then he mentioned their meeting with ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar, how he questioned him about that, the latter’s disavowal of whoever made such claims, and his affirmation that Allāh would not accept the deeds of whoever did not believe in *qadar*.

The heresiographers related from many Qadarī groups their denial of the Creator’s foreknowledge of any of the actions of creatures prior to their enacting them. He only knows of these actions, they say, after they come to be. Al-Qurṭubī³⁰⁴ and others said: “This school is now extinct and we know of none among later Muslims to whom such a position is attributed. Today’s *Qadariyya* agree one and all that Allāh knows the actions of creatures before their occurrence. They contradict the Predecessors only in claiming that the actions of creatures are actually ordained by them and performed by them independently. Although this school is also falsehood, nevertheless, it is less deviant than the first one.”

As for its later representatives, they deny the linkage (*ta‘alluq*) of the Divine Will to the acts of creatures lest they link up what is pre-existent with what is originated. Their position is defeated from the start as indicated by al-Shāfi‘ī’s statement: “If a Qadarī concedes the Divine foreknowledge, he is refuted.”³⁰⁵ He means

³⁰⁴ See note 293.

³⁰⁵ This concise statement shows al-Shāfi‘ī’s mastery of the science of *kalām*. See on this the chapter devoted to him in our *Four Imāms and Their Schools* as well as the chapter on Imām Aḥmad, Allāh be well-pleased with them.

that he is immediately asked: “Can something exist contrary to what is in the Divine knowledge?” If he say no, he conforms to the position of *Ahl al-Sunna*; if he says yes, he attributes ignorance [to Allāh], exalted is He far beyond that!

A Warning

The context suggests that belief is attributed only to someone who confirms (*saddaqa*) all that precedes, whereas the jurists are content to attribute belief to whoever believes in Allāh and His Messenger. There is no difference between the two positions: by “belief in the Messenger of Allāh” is meant belief in the Messenger’s existence and what he brought from his Lord; thus, all the foregoing enters into this definition, and Allāh knows best.

[“Submission (*al-islām*) is] that you worship Allāh,” Al-Nawawī said: “‘Worship’ here could mean the knowledge of Allāh (*ma’rifat Allāh*), so that its coordination with prayer (*salāt*) and the rest is to make it part of *islām*. It is also possible that what is meant by ‘worship’ is obedience in absolute terms, as a heading which regroups all the religious duties. In the second sense, the coordination of prayer and so forth with it is like coordinating the particular to the general.”

In my opinion, the first alternative is far-fetched because knowledge of Allāh is among the concerns of belief while submission consists of verbal and physical acts. The wording of Umar’s narration here is, “that you bear witness that there is no God but Allāh and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh.” This wording indicates that what is meant by “worship” in the ḥadīth under study is the utterance of the two testimonies. This shows that the second alternative must be rejected also.

When the narrator expressed [the sense of] worship, he needed to clarify it by adding “and that you associate nothing with Him.” He needed no such clarification in ‘Umar’s version because it included it by necessity.

If it is said that the question was general and the answer specific – he asked what *islām* was, and the reply was “to worship or testify, etc.;” what *īmān* was, and the reply was “to believe, etc.;” what *iḥsān* was, “to worship [as if you were seeing], etc.” – the answer is: it is a subtle point, namely, the difference between the verbal noun [*islām*, *īmān*, *iḥsān*] and the conjunction “that” (*an*) followed by a verb [the noun clause “that you + verb”]. For the conjunction and the verb “that you do” point to something future, whereas the verbal noun is timeless.

Nevertheless, some of the narrators did express [the replies] here as verbal nouns. ‘Uthmān ibn Ghiyāth’s narration has: “He said, ‘the testimony that there is no God but Allāh.’” Likewise, Anas’s narration.

The fact that the questioner is addressed with the singular of the second person does not mean that the reply concerns him exclusively. Rather, the reply is meant to teach all the listeners the proper ruling concerning them and all those who, like them, are legally responsible. This is made plain in the end by the phrase “[he came] to teach the people their Religion.”

The question arises: why was pilgrimage not mentioned? Someone said it may have not been a categorical obligation at the time, but this is disproved by Ibn Mandah’s narration in *al-Īmān* with his chain of transmission per Muslim’s criterion, through Sulaymān at Taymī, as narrated by ‘Umar and beginning with the words: “Toward the end of the Prophet’s ﷺ life a man came to him [...]”³⁰⁶ then he cited the narration in full. “The end of the

³⁰⁶ Narrated by Ibn Mandah in *al-Īmān* (1:144-145) and Abū Nu‘aym in *al-Musnad al-Mustakhraj ‘alā Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1:102 §83).

Prophet's life" may mean that the event took place after the Farewell Pilgrimage, since that was his last trip, shortly after which, less than three months later, he passed away. It is as if the event described came after all the rulings of the religion had been revealed, to establish and confirm, in a single sitting, all the matters of the religion which the Prophet ﷺ had declared separately, so that they would be established as canon (*li-tandabiṭ*). Also inferred from this is the permissibility, for one who already knows the answer, to ask the learned for the benefit of the listener.

As for the Pilgrimage it is definitely mentioned, but some of the transmitters have either overlooked it or forgotten it. This is proven by the discrepancies among them in mentioning certain acts and omitting others. For example:

- In Kahmas's narration, we have "and that you perform pilgrimage to the House if you are able to find a way." The same is found in Anas's ḥadīth.
- In 'Aṭā' al-Khurāṣāni's narration, there is no mention of the fast.
- Abū 'Āmir's ḥadīth stops after listing prayer and the poor-due.
- Ibn 'Abbās's ḥadīth adds nothing to the two testimonies.
- Sulaymān al-Taymī mentions everything in his narration and, after mentioning "and that you perform pilgrimage," even adds "and the lesser Pilgrimage, and that you wash in case of major impurity, and make your ablution perfect."
- Finally, Maṭar al-Warrāq has in his narration: "And that you establish the prayer and pay the poor-due; then he mentioned the bonds ('urā') of Islām."³⁰⁷

It is clear from all that we mentioned that some narrators rendered with precision what others did not.

³⁰⁷ Narrated by Abū 'Awāna in his *Musnad* (4:194).

“establish the prayer,” Muslim added “prescribed” (*al-makṭūba*), that is, compulsory (*al-mafrūḍa*). This expression is only for stylistic beauty since the same term was used in relation to the poor-due, and also in keeping with the saying of Allāh Almighty: {*The Prayer is enjoined on the Believers at stated times*} (4:103).

“and fast Ramadān.” This clause was used as proof that one may say “Ramadān” without having to say “the month of.” This question will be discussed in the Book of Fasting, Allāh willing.

“Excellence (*iḥsān*) [is that you worship Allāh as if you were seeing Him].” *Iḥsān* is a verbal noun (*maṣdar*). You say, “He has excelled (*aḥsana*), he excels (*yuh̄sinu*) with excellence (*iḥsānan*).” The verb is used absolutely or transitively. You say: “You have excelled in this” (*aḥsanta kadhā*) to mean that you did it thoroughly; and “you have excelled toward so-and-so” (*aḥsanta ilā fulān*) to mean you brought him benefit. We are concerned here with the first meaning, since the purport is thorough worship. The second meaning can also be borne in mind since a sincere worshipper, for example, excels toward himself because of his sincerity. Excellence in worship consists in sincerity in worship, humility and awe, full attention from the moment one enters worship, and contemplation of the One Who is worshipped.

He referred to two states in his reply, the highest being that the witnessing of *al-Haqq* in the heart overwhelms one to the point that one seems to see Him with one’s very eyes. Hence he said: “as if you were seeing Him,” that is, as if you were seeing Him seeing you. The second state is that one recollects (*yastah̄dir*) that *al-Haqq* is watching him and sees everything he does, as in the words: “He certainly sees you.”

These two states are brought to fruition by knowledge of Allāh and fear of Him. The expression used in the narration of ‘Umāra

ibn al-Qa‘qā‘ is, “that you fear (*takhshā*) Allāh as if you were seeing Him” and also in Anas’s narration.

Al-Nawawī said:³⁰⁸

Its meaning is that you would observe the aforementioned manners only when you see Allāh and He sees you, not because you see Him, but because He sees you; and He always sees you, therefore, excel in your worship of Him even if you do not see Him. The gist of the narration, therefore, is that even if you do not see Allāh, persevere in excellent worship because He is seeing you.

This passage of the ḥadīth is a sublime principle among the principles of the Religion and a paramount foundation for Muslims. It is the reliance of the most truthful ones, the focus of wayfarers, the treasure of knowers, and the rule of the righteous. It is one of the pithy expressions encompassing the widest meanings (*jawāmi‘ al-kalim*) which were given to the Prophet ﷺ. The people of spiritual realization (*ahl al-tahqiq*) have exhorted us to sit in the company of the righteous and recommended that such be devoid of even the slightest blemish out of respect for them and shame before them. What about one whom Allāh never ceases watching, privately and publicly?

Al-Qādī ‘Iyād and others spoke about this principle before him. More on this in the commentary on Sūrat Luqmān, Allāh willing.

A Warning

The context of the narration indicates that there is no visual sight of Allāh in this world. (The Prophet’s ﷺ sight [of Allāh ﷺ] is supported by another proof-text.) Muslim explicitly mentioned in his narration from Abū Umāma that the Prophet ﷺ said: “And you must know that you cannot see your Lord until you die.”

³⁰⁸ Perhaps in his commentary on al-Bukhārī.

[Critique of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Interpretation]

One of the extreme Sufis (*ba‘du ghulāt al-ṣūfiyya*) ventured to interpret the ḥadīth without knowledge, saying:

It contains an allusion (*ishāra*) to the station of self-effacement and extinction (*maqām al-maḥwi wal-fanā’*) and the gist of it is, “if you are not” (*fa-in lam takun*), that is, if you become nothing and extinguish your self to the point that you no longer exist, then “at that time you shall see Him” (*fa-innaka hīna’idhin tarāh*).³⁰⁹

Whoever said this erred carelessly due to ignorance of the Arabic language, for if the meaning was as he claimed, it would not say *tarāh* but *tarah* without a long *alif* but a short vowel, the verb being – according to that interpretation – the apodosis of a conditional sentence. Yet, in none of the different versions of this narration does the verb occur with a shortened vowel. Whosoever claims that it is kept long even if the verb is in the apocopate genitive form (*majzūm*) contrary to the norm, we reply there is no need here for such an exception.³¹⁰ Moreover, if the inter-

³⁰⁹ Cf. Shaykh Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī toward the end of his very brief *Kitāb al-Fanā’ fil-Mushāhada*, trans. Stephen Hirtenstein and Layla Shamash, *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* IX (1991) p. 1-17.

³¹⁰ Al-Shaykh al-Akbar undoubtedly possessed mastery of the language and it would have been fair to mention the continuation of his text at this point, since it pre-empts the grammatical objections through a typically Akbarī argument: “It is established that the *alif* in ‘tarāhu’ is for the sake of His manifestation, because of the vision’s dependence upon it. If he had eliminated it and said ‘tarahu,’ the vision would not occur because the pronoun *ha* in the word ‘tarāhu’ denotes the one who is absent, and the absent one cannot be seen, and if the *alif* had been eliminated, then He would be seen without vision, and that cannot occur. So that is why the *alif* was mentioned. As for the wisdom of maintaining the pronoun *ha*, the meaning given is that the words ‘if you are not, you see Him’ point to the fact that while you see by the existence of the *alif*, you do not say ‘I have encompassed,’ for He, the Most High, is too majestic and glorious to be encompassed, and such a thing would not be possible. So the *ha* exists as the pronoun of that which is ab-

pretation he claimed were sound, then the words, “verily He sees you” would make no sense, as they would remain suspended without connection to what precedes them.³¹¹

Another weakness in this interpretation is that the narration of Kahmas has the wording “For, if you see Him not, verily He sees you” (*fa-innaka in lā tarāh, fa-innahu yarāk*) – likewise that of Sulaymān al-Taymī – where negation unequivocally governs the seeing, not the being, contrary to what the contrived interpretation claims. Also, Abū Farwa’s narration has “for if you see Him not, verily He sees you” (*fa-in lam tarah, fa-innahu yarāk*); and there is something similar in the ḥadīths of Anas and Ibn ‘Abbās. All of this invalidates the foregoing interpretation, and Allāh knows best.

A Note of Benefit

Muslim adds, in ‘Umāra ibn al-Qa‘qā’s narration, the questioner’s comment “what you say is true” (*sadaqta*) following each of the three answers. Abū Farwa added in his narration: “When we heard the man saying ‘what you say is true,’ we disapproved of him,” while Kahmas has: “We wondered about him – first he questioned the Prophet ﷺ then he confirmed him?” and Maṭar: “Look at him questioning him and then confirming him!” Anas has in his ḥadīth: “Look at him questioning him and confirming him as if he knew more than him!” In Sulaymān ibn Burayda’s

sent from you during the vision of the Reality of the Truth (*haqīqat al-haqq*), which acts like a witness for you of the impossibility of encompassment.” *Kitāb al-Fanā’* (p. 14).

³¹¹ Because the text of the ḥadīth has been altered to read “for if you are not, you will see Him” (*fa-in lam takun, tarah*) by which the sense is complete, instead of the original “for if you are not seeing Him” (*fa-in lam takun tarāh*), which requires a conclusion. Nevertheless, the Sufi interpretation simply adds the remaining clause as a new proposition, thus: “For if you are not, you will see Him, and He sees you in any case.”

narration: “The people said, ‘We never saw a man such as this (*mā rāyñā rajulan mithla hādhā*),³¹² he seemed to be teaching the Prophet ﷺ, telling him: *ṣadaqt, ṣadaqt!*’”

Al-Qurṭubī³¹³ said: “They were astonished at this only because what the Prophet ﷺ brought could not be known except by himself, whereas this questioner was not recognized as someone who had met the Prophet ﷺ or heard from him. Yet, there he was, asking questions like one who is already an expert in what he is asking, since he was informing the Prophet ﷺ that what he said was true. Hence, they were astonished at this as they never expected it.” And Allāh knows best.

“When is the Final Hour?” Meaning: “When will the Final Hour begin?” as was explicitly stated in ‘Umāra ibn al-Qa‘qā’s narration. The definite article “the” points to a specific sense (*lil-‘ahd*) and what is meant is the Day of Resurrection.

“The one who is questioned about it is no” (*mā al-masūlū ‘anhā*): “*mā*” is a negating particle here. Abū Farwa’s narration adds: “He bent his head and did not answer him. Then the man repeated his question but, again, he did not answer him, and so three times. Then he raised his head and said: ‘The one who is questioned is no...’”

“more informed at all” (*bi-a‘lama*): the letter “*ba*” here is redundant (*zā‘ida*) for the emphasis of negation. Although this [reply] implies parity of knowledge (*al-tasāwī fil-‘ilm*), what is actually meant is parity in the [specific] knowledge that Allāh Almighty has reserved the knowledge of the Final Hour for Himself, since

³¹²I could not trace the wording *rajulan mithla hādhā*. Ibn Burayda’s narration in Ahmad’s *Musnad* actually has, “We never saw a man treat the Messenger of Allāh with greater reverence than this man” (*mā rāyñā rajulan ashadda tawqīran li-Rasūl Allāh min hādhā*).

³¹³See note 293.

the Prophet ﷺ follows up by saying: “There are five things known only to Allāh.” This phrasing reoccurs toward the end of our discussion of this ḥadīth when he says “I knew no more at all about it than any one of you,” where parity in being uninformed about it is also meant. Likewise, in the ḥadīth of Ibn ‘Abbās, he said: “Glory to Allāh! There are five things from the unseen which no one knows except He.” Then he recited the verse [{*Lo! Allah! With Him is knowledge of the Hour. He sends down the rain, and knows that which is in the wombs. No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware*} (31:34)].”³¹⁴

Al-Nawawī said: “From this [reply] it can be inferred that when a scholar is asked about what he does not know, he declares that he does not know it without it detracting from his rank. On the contrary, such an answer shows his Godfearing scrupulousness.

Al-Qurṭubī³¹⁵ said: “The purpose of this question is to stop the listeners once and for all from asking about the time of the Final Hour. They had asked about it a great deal, as shown in many verses and ḥadīths. When the answer was obtained in its aforementioned form, they finally despaired of knowing it [in advance]. The previous questions, on the other hand, were intended to elicit answers for the listeners to learn and act upon. Those answers highlighted the distinction between what can be known and what cannot.”

“than the questioner;” Rather than saying, “I know nothing more about it than you do,” he used an expression with universal implications to draw in all listeners. That is, every possible person to be questioned and every possible questioner are also meant.

³¹⁴ Narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās by Aḥmad and al-Bazzār cf. al-Haythamī (1:39).

³¹⁵ See note 293.

A Note of Benefit

This question-and-answer exchange took place between ‘Īsā ibn Maryam and Gibrīl, upon them peace, but ‘Īsā was the questioner and Gibrīl the one being questioned. Al-Ḥumaydī said in his Nawādir: “Sufyān narrated to us: Mālik ibn Mighwāl narrated to us, from Ismā‘il ibn Rajā’, from al-Sha‘bī: “‘Īsā ibn Maryam asked Gibrīl about the Final Hour. Gibrīl’s wings shuddered and he said: ‘The one who is questioned about it is no more informed at all than the questioner.’”³¹⁶

“and I shall inform you about its preconditions.” In the [Book of] *Tafsīr*, [al-Bukhārī has] “but I shall tell you.” Abū Farwā’s narration has “but it has signs (*‘alāmāt*) by which it can be known” and Kahmas’s “He said: ‘Then inform me of its portent (*amāra*),’” whereupon he informed him.

At this point it is not clear whether he initiated the mention of the portents or whether the questioner asked him about the portents first. This [difficulty] is resolved if we consider that he first said, “and I shall inform you,” then the questioner replied, “do inform me.” The wording in Sulaymān al-Taymī’s narration supports this: “But if you wish, I shall appraise you of its preconditions. He said: Yes (*ajal*).” Something similar is found in the ḥadīth of Ibñ ‘Abbās, with the addition: “Do tell me (*fa-haddithnī*).”

The detailing of these preconditions (*ashrāt*) was given in the other narration where it is made clear that they are the signs [of the Day of Judgment]. The variances in the narrations suggest that “telling” (*tahdīth*), “informing” (*ikhbār*), and “appraising” (*inbā’*) are all one and the same meaning. The ḥadīth scholars differentiated between them only in ḥadīth nomenclature.³¹⁷

³¹⁶ Narrated by Ibñ al-Mubārak in *al-Zuhd* (p. 77 §228).

³¹⁷ *Haddathānā* means the students heard the narration(s) from the mouth of the

Al-Qurṭubi³¹⁸ said: “The signs of the Final Hour are two types: what is customary and what is not. The type mentioned here is the first type. As for extraordinary things such as the rising of the sun from where it sets, the customary signs precede them closely or accompany them. So, what is meant here is the first kind of signs.” And Allāh knows best.

“When she gives birth” The term “when” impresses upon us the certainty of the event. The clause comes as an elucidation (*bayānan*) for the preconditions of the Final Hour with regard to the meaning, namely, [that the preconditions of the Day of Judgment are] the slave girl’s giving birth and the over-reaching of shepherds.

It may be asked why the conditions are in the plural, which requires three items at least according to the most correct usage, while only two are mentioned. Al-Kirmānī answered: “The term for the few can be borrowed to denote the many and vice versa.” Another answer is that the differentiation between the few and the many is only for indefinites (*al-nakirāt*), not specifics (*al-ma‘ārif*), or because the word “condition” (*shart*) does not have a plural of multitude. All these answers leave something to be desired.

The most satisfying answer is that there are in fact three preconditions being mentioned but some of the narrators mentioned only two, such as here (birth-giving and over-reaching) and in

shaykh, *akhbaranā* means (in late usage) the students read the narration(s) back to the shaykh, and *anbaānā* means (in late usage) the narrations are narrated by permission of the shaykh without audition. In early usage they are all mostly one and the same meaning. See the “ways of conveyance” (*turuq al-adā’*) in Ibn Hajar, *Nuzhat al-Nażar* (‘Itr 3rd ed. p. 123-125), al-Qāri, *Sharḥ Sharḥ Nukhbat al-Fikar* (Tamīm ed. p. 661-673), ‘Itr, *Manhaj al-Naqd fi ‘Ulūm al-Hadīth* (3rd ed. p. 224-225), etc.

³¹⁸See note 293.

the Book of *Tafsīr* (birth-giving and the usurpation of leadership by the unshod rabble). However, the narration of Muḥammad ibn Bishr whose chain Muslim narrated – and whose wording Ibn Khuzayma cited – from Abū Ḥayyān [al-Tamīmī] mentions three things. So does the narration in al-Ismā‘īlī’s *Mustakhraj* through Ibn ‘Ulayya. Thus did ‘Umāra ibn al-Qa‘qā‘ also mention it and, likewise, ‘Umar’s ḥadīth, while Kahmas’s narration mentions only the birth-giving and the over-reaching, as does ‘Uthmān ibn Ghiyāth’s. Sulaymān al-Taymi’s narration mentions three items and ‘Atā’ al-Khurāsānī agrees with him. The same three items are also mentioned in the ḥadīth of Ibn ‘Abbās and that of Abū ‘Āmir.

“When the slave girl gives birth to her master” The Book of *Tafsīr* has: “her mistress” in the feminine as does ‘Umar’s narration. Muḥammad ibn Bishr has the same but adds “meaning, concubines (*al-sarāri*).” ‘Umāra ibn al-Qa‘qā‘’s narration has: “When you see a woman giving birth to her master” while Abū Farwa has something similar. ‘Uthmān ibn Ghiyāth’s narration has: “When slave girls give birth to their masters” in the plural. “Master” (*al-rabb*) means the owner (*al-mālik*) or lord (*al-sayyid*).

The scholars have long differed over the meaning of this passage. Ibn al-Tin said there were seven different interpretations of it and he mentioned them but they overlap. I have summed them up without overlapping and reduced them to four views:

I. Al-Khaṭṭābī said it means the expansion of Islām and the Muslims’ empowerment over heathendom (*bilād al-shirk*) and capture of its offsprings for use as concubines. Then, when a man who owned a slave girl had a child by her, her child was like her lord because it was her master’s child. Al-Nawawī and others said this was the opinion of the majority of the scholars. Nevertheless, the claim that this is what is meant here leaves something to be

desired. Taking possession of slave women existed at the time of this saying, while empowerment over the lands of disbelievers, the capture of their offspring, and their use as concubines took place in the early stages of Islām for the most part. The context has to allude to something unprecedented that will happen near the rising of the Final Hour.

Wakī‘ [ibn al-Jarrāḥ] explained it even more specifically – with regard to Ibn Mājah’s narration – as the non-Arabs giving birth to the Arabs. Someone said it signifies a slave giving birth to a king, the mother becoming part of his subjects and the king being master over them. This is what Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī said. He defended it by pointing out that the early leaders generally stayed away from the beds of slave women and, instead, vied in marrying free women; then the matter was reversed, especially in the Abbāsid period. However, the narration of “her mistress” (*rabbatahā*) in the feminine does nothing to help this explanation.

Someone said that the term “master” for the slave’s child is figurative. Because her child is the cause of her emancipation after the master’s death, that was called her master.

Someone put it in the specific context that when captives abound, the child might initially be among the captives in his childhood, then he is emancipated, grows up, and becomes a leader or even a king. Then his mother might be made captive later and he becomes in a position to buy her, either knowing her to be his mother or unaware of the fact, and he uses her as his servant or for his sexual gratification (*aw yattakhidhuhā mawtū‘atan*), or he might free her and marry her. Indeed, one of the narrations has: “When the slave woman gives birth to her husband (*ba‘lahā*).” This is in Muslim, and it is understood according to that scenario. However, it was also said that the term *ba‘l* here meant the owner, which is more indicated so that the narrations are all in agreement.

II. It means that the masters will sell the mothers of their children and this kind of practice will abound. Owners will keep buying and selling the mother until her own son buys her unawares. In this sense, the precondition of the Hour which is meant is pervasive ignorance of the prohibition against selling child-bearing slaves (*ummahāt al-awlād*), or contempt for the rule of law.

If it is objected that the fact there is disagreement over the issue invalidates such an interpretation, since the one who holds that it is permitted is neither ignorant nor contemptuous of the Law, my answer is that it is possible to interpret it in a sense agreed upon by all sides, for example selling the mother while she is pregnant, which is unanimously forbidden.

III. In the same vein as the preceding view, al-Nawawī said: “The scenario of the child buying his or her mother is not exclusive to the case of child-bearing slaves. It is conceivable, also, for a slave woman to give birth to a free child from other than her master through intercourse in which there is doubt as to the identity of the father, or for her to give birth to a bond child from another slave either through marriage or adultery. In both cases she is then sold in valid fashion. Then she roams from hand to hand until her own son or daughter buys her.” This view is not impaired by Muhammad ibn Bishr’s interpretation that what is meant is concubines, since there is no proof that it is exclusively so.

IV. It means that there will be much filial impiety (*‘uqūq al-awlād*) and a son will treat his mother the way a master treats his slave, demeaning her through insults, blows, and servitude. Hence, he is called her lord metaphorically; or, if “master” (*rabb*) here means “tutor” (*murabbi*), then literally. The latter is the soundest explanation in my opinion because it encompasses the

most meanings and because the context indicates that what is meant is a strange state of affairs in addition to general depravity.

To sum up, the passage indicates that the rising of the Final Hour will become imminent when matters are reversed, such that the cub will become the tutor and the underling will become lofty. This concurs with his statement regarding the next sign, “the rabble shall become the kings of the earth.”

Two Warnings

Al-Nawawī said: “This passage neither constitutes a proof that it is forbidden to sell child-bearing slaves nor does it constitute a proof that it is permissible. Whoever held either view was mistaken, for taking something as a sign for something else indicates neither prohibition nor permissibility.” Second, what reconciles the use of “lord” (*rabb*) in the sense of master and owner in this ḥadīth with [its prohibition in] another authentic ḥadīth, “Let none of you say ‘feed your lord’ (*at’im rabbak*), ‘cleanse your Lord’ (*waddi’ rabbak*), or ‘bring your lord something to drink’ (*isqi rabbak*), but let him say ‘my master and patron’ (*sayyidi wa-mawlāy*),” is that the wording here serves the purpose of exaggeration, or that “lord” here signifies “tutor,” while in the ḥadīth of prohibition it means “master.” Another two possibilities are that the prohibition post-dates the ḥadīth under study or that it applies to other than the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ.

“and when the destitute camelherds (*ru’ātu al-ibili al-buhmu*)/ the herders of jet-black camels (*ru’ātu al-ibili al-buhami*) compete [in building tall structures]” It means they pride themselves and compete in building tall structures and doing so in abundance.

The word *buhm* is cited as *bahm* in al-Asīlī’s³¹⁹ narration; this is incompatible with the mention of the camels but is compatible

³¹⁹ See note 302.

with sheep or goats, as in the version without the camel construct in Muslim: “the sheperds of little lambs” (*ri‘ā’ al-bahmi*). *Buhm* in al-Bukhārī’s version can either be a nominative attribute of the camelherds (*buhmu*), or a genitive attribute of the camels (*buhumi*) in the sense of the jet-black camel. It is said that they consider black the worst color for camels while red is the proverbial best, as in the expression “better than red livestock.”

The herders were described as destitute either because they are of unknown lineage, whence we say “he is obscure” (*huwa abhamu al-amr*) and “anonymous” (*mubham*) when one is unable to ascertain his actual identity. Al-Qurṭubī³²⁰ said: “It is best understood as meaning the black color because this is their complexion in most cases. It is also said they are destitute, as in the ḥadīth ‘People will be gathered barefoot, naked, and destitute’ (*hufātan ‘urātan buhman*),³²¹ but this leaves something to be desired, as they are said to have camels, so how could they be said to own nothing?” My answer is that expression can be understood as an annexation of function (*idāfat ikhtīṣāṣ*), not ownership. In the majority of cases, herders graze the herd for someone else in exchange for a wage and seldom does the owner graze his own herd himself.

In the Book of *Tafsīr*: “And when the barefoot and naked” to which al-Ismā‘ili’s narration [following *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*] adds “the

³²⁰ See note 293.

³²¹ Narrated from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Unays al-Anṣārī by Ahmād, al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* (2:433) and his *Ṣaḥīḥ* without chain (*ta‘līqan*) but with categorical attribution (*bi-sīghat al-jazm*), al-Ḥākim (2:427-428, 4:574-575), and others cf. *Faṭḥ al-Bārī* (1:127). This is the first of the “single ḥadīths for the sake of which one of the Companions undertook travel” which al-Khaṭīb narrated in his *Rīḥla fi Ṭalab al-Ḥadīth* (p. 109-118 §31-33 *ṣaḥīḥ*) and we heard it from the latter’s editor, our teacher Nūr al-Dīn ‘Itr, all of which in the wording “naked, uncircumcized, and destitute” (“*urātan ghurlan buhman*). As for the wording “barefoot, naked, and uncircumcized” (*hufātan ‘urātan ghurlan*), it is narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās and ‘Aishā by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā’ī, al-Dārimī, and Ahmād.

deaf and dumb.” They were given these attributes as a hyperbole for their ignorance, since they did not use their hearing or eyesight to discern any of their religious obligations although their senses were sound.

“are the top leaders of the people” This means the kings of the earth as explicitly stated in al-Ismā‘ilī’s and Abū Farwa’s narrations. Those meant are the people of the desert, as explicitly stated in Sulaymān al-Taymī’s and other narrations: “Who are ‘the barefoot and naked?’” He replied: “The little Arabs (*al-‘urayb*).”

Al-Tabarānī narrates through Abū Ḥamza, from Ibn ‘Abbās, from the Prophet ﷺ: “Part of the overthrow (*inqilāb*) of the Religion is the affectation of eloquence by the boors (*al-nabat*) and their betaking to palaces in big cities.” Al-Qurṭubī said: “What is meant here is the prediction of a reversal in society whereby the people of the desert will take over and hold sway over every region by force. They will become very rich and their primary concern will be to erect tall buildings and take pride in them. We have witnessed this in our time.” Of identical import are the ḥadīths “The Hour will not rise until the happiest man in the world will be the depraved son of a depraved father (*luka‘ ibn luka‘*)” and “If leadership is entrusted to those unfit for it, expect the Hour,” both of them in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

“Among five things” That is: the knowledge of the Hour is numbered among five things. It is allowed to suppress the subject of the governing word (*muta‘allaq al-jārr*), as when Allāh Most High said {*Among nine signs*} (27:12), meaning: “Go to Pharaoh with this sign which is one of nine signs in all.” ‘Atā’ al-Khurāsānī’s narration has: “He said, ‘Then when is the Hour?’ He replied, ‘It is among five things of the unseen which Allāh alone knows.’”

Al-Qurṭubī said:

No one whatsoever may aspire to know anything about these five things as stipulated in this ḥadīth. In addition, the Prophet ﷺ explained that the verse {And He has with Him the keys to the unseen, which no one knows except He} (6:59) means these five things. This explanation is in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Therefore, whoever claims to know any of them independently of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, that person is a liar in what they claim. As for conjecture about the unseen, such is possible on the part of the astrologer (*al-munajjim*) and others³²² since it is a matter of custom, not knowledge, and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr cited Consensus over the prohibition of taking, stipulating, or giving any kind of compensation in exchange for such information.

It is narrated that Ibn Mas‘ūd said: “Your Prophet was given the knowledge of all things except these five.”³²³ There is a similar narration from Ibn ‘Umar from the Prophet ﷺ and Aḥmad related both of them. Humayd ibn Zanjūyah related from one of the Companions ﷺ that someone mentioned [by way of objection] the knowledge of the times of solar eclipses before their occurrence, whereupon he rebuked him and said: “The unseen consists in five things,” and he recited this verse. “As for the rest, it is a kind of unseen known to some people and unknown to others.”

A Warning

The reply not only addressed the question but also comprised additional guidance of importance for the *Umma* due to the general benefits derived therefrom.

³²² Such as the various types of fortune-tellers.

³²³ Narrated from Ibn Mas‘ūd by Aḥmad through the narrators of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* according to al-Haythamī (8:263).

³²⁴ Narrated from Ibn ‘Umar by Aḥmad through the narrators of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* according to al-Haythamī (8:263).

If it is said: “There is no preposition of exclusion in the verse [‘except’] as there is in the ḥadīth,” al-Ṭibī replied:

When a verb is of tremendous significance³²⁵ and what is based upon it is a lofty matter,³²⁶ the verb is tantamount to exclusive (*fuhima minhu al-ḥaṣru ‘alā sabīl al-kināya*), especially if one recalls what was mentioned among the causes of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), concerning the Arabs’ claim that they possessed knowledge of [predicting] rainfalls. All this suggests that what is meant by the verse is to refute their claim and to restrict such knowledge to Allāh alone.

A Note of Benefit

[Al-Ṭibī continued:]

The play on words which consists in switching from affirmation to negation in the saying of Allāh Most High: {No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow}³²⁷ and the formal mention of cognizance devoid of knowledge (*al-dirāyatū dūna al-‘ilm*) are for hyperbole and universalization. For cognizance is the obtainment of the knowledge of something through some device. The fact is that such knowledge is precluded from every soul, although cognizance is among the soul’s qualifications, yet it can never know this. It follows that the soul’s unacquaintance with what lies beyond such knowledge is even more certain.

Here ends the summarized excerpt from al-Ṭibī.

“the verse.” It means he recited the verse to the end of the Sūra as explicated by al-Ismā‘īlī and in ‘Umāra’s narration. Muslim has

³²⁵ I.e. to know the unseen.

³²⁶ I.e. the five things in which the unseen consists.

³²⁷ {Lo! Allāh! With Him is knowledge of the Hour. He sends down the rain, and knows that which is in the wombs. No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die. Lo! Allāh is Knower, Aware} (31:34).

“until the word {Aware},” likewise in Abū Farwa’s narration. As for what is found in al-Bukhārī’s version in the *Tafsīr* where he says “until the phrase {in the wombs},” it is a shortcoming on the part of one of the narrators. The context tells us loud and clear that he recited the entire verse.

Then He [Gibril] turned around and left. Then the Prophet ﷺ said: “Bring him back!” Al-Bukhārī added in the book of *Tafsīr*: “They went to bring him back but saw nothing.” It shows that it is possible for the angel to take a visible form for other than the Prophet ﷺ, be seen by them, and speak audibly in their presence. It is established that ‘Imrān ibn Ḥusayn used to hear the speech of the angels. And Allāh knows best.

“He came teaching (jā’ā yu‘allimu) the people” The *Tafsīr* version has “to teach” (*li-yu‘allima*). In al-Ismā‘ili: “He wanted you to learn because you did not ask.” ‘Umāra has something similar. Abū Farwa’s narration has “By the One Who sent Muḥammad with the truth, I knew no more than any one of you who he was! Truly, that was Gibril.” Abū ‘Āmir’s ḥadīth has: “Then he went away, and when we did not see which way he went, the Prophet said: ‘Glory to Allāh! This was Gibril, he came to teach the people their Religion. By the One in Whose hand is Muḥammad’s soul! He never came to me before save I recognized him, but for this time.’”

Al-Taymī’s narration has: “Then he got up and left, after which the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Bring that man back to me!” We looked for him everywhere but could not find him. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Do you know who that was? That was Gibril, he came to teach you your religion, so take what he said from him. By the One in Whose hand is my soul! he was never unrecognizable to me since he first came to me except this once. I did not recognize him until after he left.”

Ibn Ḥibbān said Sulaymān al-Taymi alone has the words “take what he said from him.” Nevertheless, he is among the highly trustworthy narrators. There is an allusion to those additional words in the Prophet’s ﷺ phrase: “He came to teach the people their Religion.” In other words, Sulaymān only singled himself out by making it explicit. The attribution of teaching to Gibril is metaphorical. He was the reason for which the answer came, hence they were told to learn from him.

All these narrations concur in that the Prophet ﷺ told the Companions about his identity after they looked for him and could not find him. As for the ḥadīth of ‘Umar through the narration of Kahmas as found in Muslim and others:

Then he departed. ‘Umar said: “A long time passed then he [the Prophet ﷺ] said to me: ‘Umar, do you know who that questioner was?’ I said, ‘Allāh and His Prophet know best.’ He said: ‘Truly, that was Gibril.’”

One of the commentators combined the meanings of the two versions in making ‘Umar’s words “a long time passed” (*fala bitthu maliyyan*) mean a certain period of time after Gibril left, as if the Prophet ﷺ revealed his identity to them after some time, but in that same sitting. However, the fact that the narration of al-Nasā’i and al-Tirmidhī says “three nights passed” makes this agreement flawed. Someone claimed misspelling (*tashīf*) here and said that the *mīm* of *maliyyan* ملیین was minimized so that the word resembled *thalāthan* ثلثان which can be written لـثـلـثـان without *alif*. This claim is wrong for Abū ‘Awāna’s narration has “several nights passed. The Prophet ﷺ met me after three nights” while Ibn Ḥibbān has “after three” and Ibn Mandah “after three days.”

Al-Nawawī reconciled the two ḥadīths in the sense that ‘Umar was not present in the gathering at the time the Prophet ﷺ spoke but was only among those who were up and about, either with

those who were searching for the man or for some other task, and he did not return with those who returned for some reason he had, so the Prophet ﷺ informed those who were present on the spot and he did not happen to inform ‘Umar until three days later. This scenario is supported by the wordings “he met me” and “He said to me, ‘‘Umar...’’ addressing him alone, contrary to his first disclosure. This is a nice reconciliation.

Abū ‘Abd Allāh said, that is, the author [al-Bukhārī].

“He made all this part of belief” that is, perfect belief, which comprises all those matters.³²⁸

Warnings

First, the narrations we mentioned showed that the Prophet ﷺ did not know that it was Gibril except after the fact and that Gibril came to him in the form of a man of handsome appearance but whom they did not know. As for what appears in al-Nasā'i's narration through Abū Farwa at the end of the ḥadīth: “Truly, it was Gibril who came down in the form of Dihya al-Kalbi,” the last clause is a misapprehension, as Dihya was known among them whereas ‘Umar said: “None of us knew him.” Muḥammad ibn Naṣr al-Marwazī narrated it in his book *al-Īmān* through the same path of transmission as al-Nasā'i and he said in the end: “Truly, it was Gibril who came to teach you your Religion,” and no more. The latter is the version that is retained since it concurs with the rest of the narrations.

Second, Ibn al-Munayyir³²⁹ said: “His statement ‘teaching you your Religion’ indicates that an excellent question can be called

³²⁸ Ibn Ḥajar apparently defuses al-Bukhārī's intention which was to refute the Ḥanafī view that deeds are not part of belief at the root but only as its perfection.

³²⁹ Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Wāhid ibn al-Munayyir al-Mālikī (d. 733) was a scholar of Qur'ān commentary and ḥadīth whom Ibn Ḥajar quotes hundreds of times in *Fatḥ al-Bārī*.

knowledge and teaching, since Gibril did nothing other than ask questions, yet the Prophet ﷺ called him a teacher. The scholars are famous for saying ‘An excellent question is half of knowledge’ and it is possible to glean it from this ḥadīth, since benefit grew out of the question and the answer together.”

Third, al-Qurṭubī said: “This ḥadīth is fit to be called the Mother of the Sunna in light of all the guidelines in the knowledge of the Sunna it contains.” Al-Ṭibī said: “This is the wisdom behind the fact that al-Baghawī began both his *Maṣābiḥ al-Sunna* and *Sharḥ al-Sunna* with this hadīth, following the lead of the Qur’ān which began with the Fātiḥa since the latter contains the generality of the teachings of the Qur’ān.” Qādī ‘Iyād said: “This ḥadīth contains all the outward and inward duties of the profession of faith, its inception, its state, and its ultimate point as well as the works of the limbs, the sincerity of inward disposition, and how to guard oneself from defective deeds. Even the sciences of the Law as a whole all go back to that ḥadīth and are supplied by it.”

This is why I discussed this ḥadīth at length, and yet, even if what I mentioned is abundant, it is still little in relation to what the ḥadīth contains, so I did not forsake concision. Allāh is the Grantor of success!